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Her Majesty the Queen

Some of the
Advantages of Easily Accessible
READING AND
RECREATION ROOMS AND
FREE LIBRARIES

WITH REMARKS ON STARTING AND MAINTAINING
THEM, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE
SELECTION OF BOOKS

BY

LADY JOHN MANNERS

REPRINTED FROM

THE 'QUEEN'

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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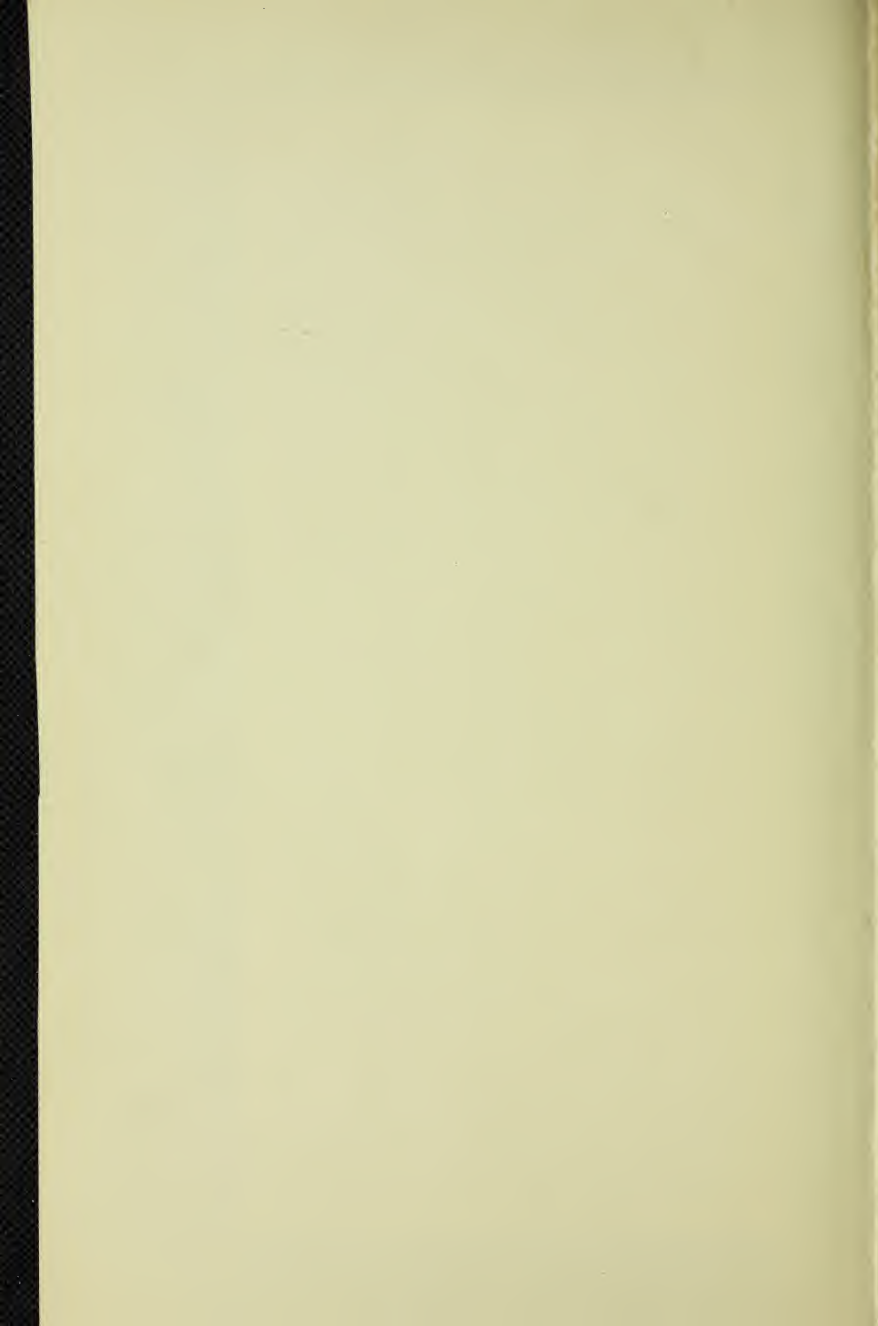
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READING AND RECREATION ROOMS
AND FREE LIBRARIES

“Recommander une bonne œuvre c’est se faire
pardonner d’avance de n’avoir pas su écrire un
bon livre.”

—A. DE PONTMARTIN

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Second Edition

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TO

The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

MADAM,

Encouraged by the gracious interest your Majesty continually takes in Libraries for your people, I have collected a few facts on the advantages of Reading and Recreation Rooms, and Free Libraries. The benefits derived by your Majesty's soldiers from the Reading-rooms established for their use have been so great, that there is reason to believe, if similar unpretending inexpensive establishments could be maintained in every district in your Majesty's empire, the happiness and usefulness of your subjects would be increased.

I am,

MADAM,

Your Majesty's grateful and humble Servant,

JANETTA MANNERS.

March 1885.



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READING AND RECREATION ROOMS, AND FREE LIBRARIES.

CHAPTER I.

NECESSITY FOR INCREASED NUMBER OF READING - ROOMS — SOME ALREADY IN EXISTENCE DESCRIBED.

AT one of the conferences, held with a view of ascertaining how to cope with the vast amount of ignorance existing even in these days, it was suggested that every town and village in these realms should be provided with free reading-rooms in proportion to the population. Public liberality and private munificence have already done much towards establishing suitable buildings for libraries in many places. The reading-room at the British Museum is a source of blessing to thousands. The splendid free libraries in our great manufacturing cities excite the envy of foreign visitors to our country. Our public schools have spacious halls filled with volumes

specially chosen with reference to the boys and the young men for whom they are intended. The heads of many great retail houses provide libraries for the people they employ. Already a certain number of small towns and villages possess public reading-rooms—and where there is a suitable room filled with books, there are certain to be eager interested readers. Much of the good to be derived from a library depends on the choice of the books. Some people seem to think anything will do to send to a reading-room, but the utmost care should be exercised in selecting those works which will interest and improve their readers. It would enhance the attractions of libraries to thoughtful, if uneducated people, could lectures be given from time to time, suggesting a systematic course of reading. To read the newspapers intelligently is in itself a most improving study—and no one who frequents reading-rooms can ignore the great interest taken in the journals. Maps and dictionaries should be consulted by all who wish to understand them; historical books of reference should also be at hand.

The most valuable religious teaching may, at special seasons, be gathered from the newspapers, for they usually give summaries of the best sermons of our most eloquent men. The telegraph flashes intelligence to us of what happens in

distant lands ; no political discussions that take place in both Houses of Parliament are kept secret from the person who has a penny to spend for a daily paper. The rise and progress of philanthropic movements are chronicled, and abstruse discussions held in scientific congresses may be read by the many, if only understood by the few.

I have mentioned the advantages of a daily careful study of one or two newspapers ; because in these days almost every person who can read is anxious to see “a paper.” It is hardly possible to overrate the advantages of reading and recreation rooms easily accessible to all. It is not necessary that they should be of an expensive character ; indeed, experience shows that people, as a rule, prefer comfortable, simply furnished reading-rooms to those that are decorated in a more costly manner. There should, however, be warmth and light in these rooms, and, if possible, brightness of colouring. When it is recollected that in every city and town there are vast numbers of men and women who live in lodgings, and have no place where they can sit, when not engaged in business, except in a bedroom, often shared with one or more fellow-lodgers, it will be acknowledged that a reading-room must be an invaluable boon to such persons.

Through the kindness of Mr Langton, private secretary to the Postmaster-General, I have been allowed to study the arrangements of the East London Postal and Telegraph Employés Town and Suburban Circulating Library and Literary Institute, Eastern District Office, Commercial Road, E. Thirty branch offices carry on this useful work.

The organisation of this admirable institute is so excellent, that I will quote passages from some of the rules, beginning with the first, which runs as follows:—

“The object of the institution is to maintain a library and a reading-room at the district office; to allot a sufficient number of books to each branch and suburban office; to renew periodically the supply; and to promote mental, moral, and social improvement amongst the different classes, especially the junior, by good literature, free classes, prizes, lectures, debates, periodical gatherings, and other agencies, such as an educational and literary institute would be able to employ.”

In the second rule I find—

“That this institution be established for the use of all officers in the eastern district on the payment of one halfpenny per week, by telegraph messengers and all officers at outlying offices; and one penny per week, or sixpence monthly, by all other officers; that all members be entitled to vote; that three weeks’ payment do constitute membership.”

Passing on to the constitution of the institution, there is a president, a vice-president, a general secretary, a treasurer for the postal staff, and one for the telegraph staff; two general librarians for the district office, two for outlying offices, six district office committee-men, and all local librarians; that three auditors be elected annually.

There are eighteen rules, framed with the greatest care and foresight, as to the management of the institution. The rules for the library and reading-room are very practical. I observe with pleasure that the library presses being closed on Sundays, books and periodicals of suitable character are to be left out for the use of the telegraph staff—clerks and messengers—on duty. Rule 22 provides that the reading-room and institute are to be supplied with every accessory for promoting the comfort and pleasure of members—suitable seats, reading-desks, writing-tables, framed pictures, scrap-books, games, draughts, chess-boards, for the use of those who wish for recreation as well as quiet reading. There is also a wise regulation providing that a committee shall approve of the books admitted into the library.

One of the chief advantages connected with the establishment of reading-rooms and institutes is that, where there is a centre of any good

work, many kind clever people gather round it and help it in various ways. The institute to which I now refer has for its object to provide healthful, intellectual, and physical recreation. The institute or society has its separate code of rules; it is conducted by the committee and officers of the library. The winter session for classes, lectures, debates, periodical gatherings begins in October and ends in April. The summer session begins in May and ends in October. The session includes, besides classes, at least one *conversazione*, two lectures, two debates, and one or two musical and elocutionary entertainments. All members have the right of attending free. The entertainments are suitable for boys as well as adults. This clause about the boys is most wise and kind. Boys value much the privilege of being admitted to reading-rooms. Occasionally men object to their presence, as they are rather noisy; but if it could be managed to give boys the chance of improving their minds in all reading-rooms, much good would result. I have often heard with sorrow that the difficulty of keeping boys quiet has been solved by their exclusion. Athletic sports are encouraged by the institute, and there are classes held for instruction.

There is a south-western district post-office library, which contains about five hundred

volumes ; a west-central district institute for boy sorters and telegraph messengers, with a reading and recreation room, open every evening except Sunday from 6.30 to 9.30, and a north-western district institute, on similar principles. There is also the General Post-office Sorters', Letter-Carriers', &c., Library and Literary Institution, by which a reading-room is provided at the General Post-office itself. Temperance societies are established in connection with some of the branches, swimming and cricket clubs, and there are several libraries for the boy messengers in different branches.

When Lord John Manners was Postmaster-General, he had the pleasure of assisting in giving an impetus to the movement for providing books and papers for the *employés*. Mr Stevenson Blackwood has been unwearied in his successful efforts to encourage the officials to avail themselves of the opportunities offered. The late deeply-lamented Postmaster-General, Mr Fawcett, took the keenest personal interest in the undertaking. The reports of the short addresses he gave from time to time to the Post-office officials were read all over the country, and his counsels, expressed in terse, vigorous language, must have gone to the hearts of many. The earnest manner in which he warned his hearers against betting and gambling, no doubt

helped many exposed to those temptations. It is touching to recall that beautiful wreaths were sent to lay on his coffin as a tribute of gratitude from those for whom he had shown such care.

I thought, in writing on reading and recreation rooms, it would be best to refer to some great public institution, where every one can see for himself the excellent results that follow their use. I have earnestly wished for many years that some organisation could establish circulating libraries and reading or recreation rooms for servants. There are clubs for men-servants, but I am not aware if these include well-stocked reading-rooms. When we reflect how many of those living in domestic service, even in what are called the best houses, pass the greater part of their lives in dull underground rooms, we must feel that it would be a very great boon to them if there were cheerful reading-rooms, where they could from time to time spend an hour. I feel sure that heads of families would be only too glad to subscribe to a circulating library for their servants, if they believed the books chosen would be interesting, profitable, and amusing for them. I have stayed in one large country house, where a reading-room was provided for the servants, and a lending library. Connected with the reading-room was a cricket club. The great statesman

—Lord Derby, now, alas ! no more—who made this arrangement for the comfort of his household, took a deep personal interest in it, and used to watch his servants playing cricket, applauding the good players with hearty enthusiasm.

A reading-room for the servants in a private family implies that the house is large, and some person must be told off to give out the books, and to see the papers are properly put in order. I believe, however, that in every household a few well-stored book-shelves in the rooms where our servants pass their time would be found to be much appreciated if the volumes were changed from time to time, and if care were taken to supply books or magazines bearing on the topics of the day.

Lady Zetland has a reading-room for the men of Lord Zetland's hunting establishment, and for the indoor servants at Aske. Games and newspapers are provided. The object is to make the men feel at home. Mrs John Welby has also established a reading-room at Allington, a village near Grantham, which has proved a great blessing to the people. There are, of course, many instances of similar thoughtful kindness. I have thought it best to mention only a few of those that have come under my own personal observation.

It is comparatively easy to establish a library and reading-room for the poorer classes ; a room can often be hired in a small house or a cottage at a low rate. Subscriptions usually flow in to a sufficient amount to keep a modest enterprise of the sort going. I have known a reading-room connected with a working-men's club kept on foot for a succession of years by the proceeds of concerts conducted and managed entirely by one lady. Gradually a very keen interest was taken in this little reading-room by the inhabitants. It was in a back row in the village of Birnam in Perthshire. A leading man, himself engaged in a very arduous occupation (Mr Kinnaird, the stationmaster), from the first devoted himself to promoting this object. A bazaar was held at Birnam, to which contributions were sent by the inhabitants of Birnam, Dunkeld, and the neighbourhood, while visitors contributed largely. Over £1000 was raised by this bazaar, and the reading-room has now developed into an institute, which has its quarters in a commodious building at Birnam. The poor people themselves brought numerous contributions towards the fund ; one man made a table, another boots, and some very poor old women knitted socks.

Sir Douglas Stewart of Murthly and Grandtully granted a site on favourable terms, and

in many ways liberally assisted; while Lady Stewart's encouragement was of great value.

The Birnam Institute contains a large reading-room, and a fine upper hall, which is found most useful for concerts, lectures, meetings, and tea-parties. There is a billiard-room, and a bar where non-alcoholic refreshments can be procured. The bar was provided at my earnest desire, as I believed that a coffee-room would be most useful, not only to the inhabitants, but to the excursionists who visit Birnam in great numbers in summer and autumn. The coffee department has been much appreciated. The walls of the reading-room, staircases, &c., are panelled with polished pine, of which the furniture is made. Over the mantelpiece is a print of her Majesty reviewing the volunteers in Edinburgh. One day some volunteers came in, and were at once attracted by the picture. Their delight in pointing out to each other her Majesty's figure was great; and they expressed much pleasure in seeing a variety of newspapers arranged on the tables. When they found they could have a cup of hot coffee at a few minutes' notice, they said they should come again, and bring their companions. A respectable man and wife act as librarian and manageress. The large room is found extremely useful, and the concerts are very much

enjoyed by the inhabitants ; many of them take part in singing ; some play the violin. Funds are raised by entertainments to meet a part of the expenses, as the subscriptions to the institute would not meet them all.

The hall, which seats 160 persons, has been of the greatest possible advantage, as it afforded accommodation for the holding of entertainments, or musical and other meetings.

The sailors' reading-rooms, established by Miss Weston, have done, and are doing, incalculable good : and Miss Robinson has rendered inestimable service to our soldiers and sailors. She also continues her noble and successful labours, and has just opened a reading-room at Alexandria for them. I personally think that, where it is practicable, it is advantageous to provide coffee, tea, or cocoa, and bread and butter, in reading or recreation rooms. Some of those whose experience entitles them to be listened to with respect, say they see no particular object in these refreshments being at hand. No doubt, in many cases, the great object must be to combine economy with practical good sense, and to avoid complicated arrangements. I know that in some successful reading-rooms no coffee or tea is provided, but the possibility of obtaining them adds to the attractions. It costs a very small sum to sup-

ply magazines and newspapers for a village reading-room, as so many excellent publications appear at a low price. Cheap editions are now produced of many of the best books in our language. A start could be made for about £3, but the selection must be carefully considered, the stock would have to be kept up, and some person must look after the library regularly.

When the consent of the ratepayers has been obtained, free libraries may be established out of the rates. It may reasonably be thought that money is in the end saved to the ratepayers by encouraging institutions that tend to the prevention of errors resulting from ignorance and idleness; but, alas! opposition is sometimes met when endeavouring to place these advantages before those on whom the trifling expense would fall.

The late Miss Holland almost entirely supported a free library in St Pancras. Recently it occurred to me that the park-keepers in the Regent's Park might like to avail themselves of its privileges. The consent of the inspector having been obtained, many of the men were glad to do so, and were particularly pleased to find they could take home books to their families. It is to be wished that kind persons knowing of free libraries in the neighbourhood

of public parks would take steps to make their existence known to park-keepers. As a rule, these men are intelligent, and much enjoy the loan of books.

I believe it would be found that in every parish large numbers would flock to reading-rooms were they easily accessible, and that much pleasure and profit would be the reward of intelligent readers. I would gladly have dwelt on the value of a steady course of reading the best authors, and I would have mentioned some publications, new and old, that seem suitable for reading-rooms in villages; but I have already, I fear, exceeded the limits allotted to the subject in this paper.

CHAPTER II.

COMMENCEMENT OF UNPRETENDING READING-
ROOM—SUGGESTIONS FOR BOOKS.

I WILL assume that premises have been secured suitable for reading or news rooms, easily accessible. Such rooms are often established in connection with working-men's clubs; but as the arrangements are in those cases rather more complicated, I will now consider the details of reading-rooms free to all, and in which lending libraries may be set on foot. It must be understood that the few suggestions offered are intended for those institutions where economy must be studied, and where the readers will chiefly belong to classes who cannot afford to buy books or to subscribe to expensive libraries. I am a great believer in the day of small things: when we reflect from what a simple plan Mr Raikes started the vast organisation of the Sunday-schools, we

must feel encouraged to persevere in the humblest efforts.

The promoters of useful undertakings must not be cast down if they do not perceive the fruit of their labour soon, for often much good work is accomplished silently and slowly. Instead of dilating vaguely on the blessing that these rooms are to thousands, I will quote some passages from 'Free Libraries and News-rooms,' by Mr Mullins, chief librarian of the Birmingham Free Libraries :—

"Provide your free news-room in a good thoroughfare; keep it open till ten at night; it will do more to close objectionable places and break vicious habits than any number of police."

The account given in this book of the magnificent free libraries in Birmingham is most interesting :—

"The news-rooms are open at nine in the morning; even at that hour a crowd of persons are waiting to see the advertisements. Later, tradesmen arrive, who take the two or three shillings a-year they pay in rates out in reading for themselves and their families. At mid-day working men crowd in again, giving half their dinner-hour to improve their minds. At night the rooms are crowded."

Mr Mullins tells us that—

"The room in view is used by more than two thousand men daily; multiply these rooms, and the result

is incalculable. The charm of the place is its absolute freedom. While it is used most largely by the poorer classes, yet many of the prosperous go there as well. Though used chiefly by the comparatively uneducated, the order and quietness of the place cannot be surpassed."

In the same news-room is carried on the lending library. From ten in the morning till nine at night persons are frequenting it. The issue of books reaches a thousand volumes daily; but I must refer the reader for further particulars to Mr Mullins's book, published by Messrs Sothe-ran; it may be had for one shilling. The Bir-mingham Corporation spent nearly £30,000 in building and furnishing, and expends £5000 a-year in keeping up the libraries and news-rooms.

In many places ratepayers have not yet seen the importance of such institutions, and private persons have endeavoured to provide places where books, quiet, warmth, and light may be enjoyed by their poorer neighbours.

The St Pancras Free Library is an example of what may be accomplished by private effort. It was founded and almost entirely maintained by the late Miss Holland. The reading-room is small, but it has been much appreciated by people of different classes. In the past year 8411 volumes have been borrowed—an average of about 700 each month. Canon Spence is

president, Miss Ellen M'Kee treasurer, and there is an attentive and kind librarian. It is now supported by a few friends, and the persons frequenting it often contribute towards it as a voluntary acknowledgment. Two ratepayers sign a recommendation, which is the only form necessary for a person to obtain admission. Miss Anne Swanwick subscribes for this little library to Mudie's, an excellent plan for securing really good new books. This unpretending but practically useful work is carried on at Camden Hall, 29 Camden Street, N.W.

In starting a reading-room and lending library, on however small a scale, much thought should be given as to the books likely to interest the readers who may be expected to attend.

We most of us wish to have the best of everything; with one exception, many do not care to read the best books. At all events, we might endeavour to read those which have stood the test of time before we devote the most precious of our possessions, our time, to reading publications simply because they are new.

In the previous chapter I said that a great deal might be done towards stocking the shelves of a reading-room by spending £3. Mr Buckland, manager at Messrs Sotheran's, Piccadilly—a gentleman of immense experience in books, from the

rarest editions to the very cheapest—has given me the benefit of his advice on the subject. Mr Buckland told me that Colonel Smith, Grenadier Guards, came to him, wishing to buy books of a really interesting character for the soldiers going to Egypt in the Camel Corps, to read on board ship. For £3 Mr Buckland supplied Colonel Smith with 120 books and pamphlets—biographies, novels, and works calculated to interest soldiers. Among those books were sixpenny editions of some of the best novels in our language—Scott, Dickens, Fenimore Cooper, Marryat's, and many others. Mr Buckland advises books with paper covers being bound in canvas, which protects them if much read.

It would be well in establishing a reading-room where the working classes resort, to buy several volumes of the excellent illustrated periodicals, such as the 'Illustrated London News' and 'Graphic.' Back volumes may be bought of the 'British Workman' (Partridge), of the 'Cottager and Artisan' (Religious Tract Society), of the 'Band of Hope,' and the 'Parish Magazine.' The 'British Workman' and the 'Cottager' are warmly welcomed by working people. They appear monthly, as do the others mentioned. If they do not care to read themselves, they always like to have them for their children. Some of the pictures in the

‘British Workman’ are so good that Mr Mil-lais, to whom I showed them, praised them warmly. As we do not wish the reading-room to be looked on solely as a place for amusement, or as one in which to kill time, some religious books should be included. A man of great literary power once said to me that the responsibility of recommending works on religion was very great, as there are so many different grades of thought in these days, assuming that the reading-room is to be frequented by persons of different schools. It is believed that Bishop Oxenden’s books would be warmly welcomed by a large proportion of them; two millions of his works have been sold. His ‘Labouring Man’s Book’ has proved a treasure in many a cottage, and the ‘Pathway of Safety’ is prized in countless homes. ‘The Words of Peace,’ and ‘The Home Beyond,’ are particularly adapted for the sick and the aged poor. The Bishop of Rochester’s books, ‘The Yoke of Christ,’ containing precepts which would make life much smoother if they could be faithfully followed, and ‘The Gospel of Christ,’ a most consolatory book, might be included, as the better educated persons would profit by them. A copy of ‘Cassell’s Illustrated Bible’ would be sure to be appreciated, if it could be afforded. The Bishop of Truro’s writings are published in a

cheap form, and their value is almost universally known. I am much indebted to Mr Humphreys, of Messrs Hatchards, Piccadilly, for the information he has given me on several points connected with the books most in demand. It would be advisable to have a few works on health and the conditions essential to healthy houses. Some of the publications of the Council of the Health Exhibition would be read with interest. Her Majesty's 'Journal of our Life in the Highlands,' of which there is a cheap edition, is always eagerly asked for. The Prince Consort's life, published in sixpenny parts, is very popular. If Lord Lorne's 'Pen and Pencil Pictures of Canada' could be had in a cheaper form, it would be a boon to multitudes at present interested in emigration. Park's 'Manual of Personal Care of Health' is very useful. The papers issued by the Ladies' Sanitary Society on the worth of fresh air, nursing the sick, and other subjects, might be added. 'Cassell's Popular Educator' might be taken in, and as many newspapers as possible; they must not be all on one side of politics. I have before me Messrs Cassell's catalogue, with its wonderful list of serial publications, issued in monthly parts at sevenpence each. I also have Messrs Routledge's list, embracing several pages, with the titles of excellent works at six-

pence each. After a list of 233 novels, I find I can buy Johnson's Dictionary, in cloth, for sixpence, and many other useful books; while I see there are thirty song-books at sixpence, each containing 144 pages; and lovers of sacred poetry may buy the 'Christian Year' for sixpence. In Ward & Lock's Educational Series useful volumes are to be had for a shilling; and their penny books for the people contain stores of necessary information. The Sunbeam Series, published by Messrs Longmans, is most popular, including delightful works. Lady Brassey's 'Voyage in the Sunbeam,' which gave the name to the series, has been adopted as a standard reading-book in French schools, and in many of our board-schools. Frederick Warne's cheap publication on household matters cannot be too highly praised. The popular 'Tales from Blackwood' are always in demand. For a penny each a series of books on cookery, health, and dress may be had at Allmans. The Pure Literature, the Christian Knowledge, the Religious Tract, and the Church of England Temperance Societies, all contribute to the great object of placing the means of self-improvement within the reach of those who cannot afford expensive books. If free reading-rooms could be universally established, the vast influence for good exercised by these powerful

organisations would be brought to bear on the people far more powerfully than is the case at present. In cases where sufficient funds are available for their purchase, there are hosts of valuable but inexpensive books to be obtained containing records of the lives of excellent men and women, specially adapted for those who have not access to long biographies. Works by Smiles, such as 'Self-Help,' 'The Life of George Stephenson,' 'Duty,' 'Thrift;' 'Plain Living and High Thinking,' by J. Davenport Adams; 'Classics for the Million,' by Henry Grey; Green's 'Short Account of the English People;' 'The Life of the Duke of Wellington;' 'Living in Earnest,' by Joseph Johnston; 'Faithful Soldiers and Servants,' by Mary Lewis; 'English Hearts and Hands;' 'The Life of Captain Hedley Vickers,' by Miss Marsh; and 'Active Service,' by Miss Robinson, are very suitable. These books vary in price, but all have the same high aim in view. Though undoubtedly works of fiction are most in demand by average frequenters of libraries, yet, when the taste for reading is once acquired, it frequently happens that after a while biographies and travels are sought in preference. For instance, Smiles's books, published by John Murray, are eagerly asked for; and many of the books published by Nelson are great favourites. 'Engine-driving Life,' by Reynolds, a most stir-

ring book, would rivet the attention of those interested in the wonders of steam ; and nearly all very young men would delight in Ballantyne and Kingston's books of adventure, though they are written for boys, the descriptions of deeds of daring and sport are so graphic. Some of the little papers published by the Young Men's Friendly Society should find a corner, as many young persons do not know how to find the classes and lectures now given unless they are directed.

In free libraries women can share the advantages of the books ; and it has been found desirable to have some works specially intended for women who wish to be really help-mates to their husbands or their families. I name a few : Mrs Valentine's ' Domestic Economy ; ' ' Enquire Within upon Everything ; ' Miss Nightingale's ' Notes on Nursing ; ' Miss Octavia Hill's ' Homes of the London Poor ; ' Lady Hope's ' Our Coffee-Room ; ' Miss Weston's ' Our Blue-Jackets ; ' ' The Early Choice,' a book for daughters ; ' Friendly Words for Our Girls,' by Lady Baker ; ' Thoughts for Young Women in Business,' by Mrs W. H. Wigley. I must strongly recommend this most useful little book to the attention of shop-assistants ; it is published by Nisbet. ' Letters to Young Women in Mills and Factories,' Parker, published by Messrs Hatchards, contain advice applicable to all young

women ; so do 'Letters to Young Women,' by J. M. Carr. 'Common-Sense for Housemaids,' by Jane Tytler, is a really diverting and practical book (mistresses and maids ought to read it). 'An Old Mother's Letter to Young Women,' by Mrs Bayly, is valuable ; and so is her 'Letter on Temperance Work,' addressed to our serving friends. 'Lectures on Health,' by Caroline Hallett, may be bought for a shilling, and will save the purchaser many pounds, if understood. The Girls' Friendly Society papers should be placed in the room ; Warne's 'Cookery Book for the Million' contains two hundred useful recipes, and its cost is twopence ; 'Cookery Recipes for the Million,' published by the Ladies' Sanitary Society, are very good. The 'Life of Princess Alice,' if it comes into a cheap edition, would be most suitable ; for it would show many busy, harassed women that their Queen's daughter worked for her children, nursed them devotedly, and found time to care for the sick and needy, while managing her household and cultivating her mind.

Some manuals on astronomy, chemistry, botany, and physiology may now be had at small cost, and would interest the more intelligent frequenters.

A printed catalogue is an essential in every reading-room and circulating library. If facil-

ities for writing letters can be given, they greatly add to the comfort of the people. A few books for boys and girls, even some for young children, would be prized by the parents, if they could take them home to show to their families. When money can be afforded to buy books in good-sized type, it certainly is an advantage, especially to persons who are not in the habit of reading much. An occasional musical entertainment may be given, if there are two rooms, but care must be taken not to disturb the readers often.

In starting a library—as, indeed, in every other undertaking—it is good to remember the proverb, “*Festina lente*” (make haste slowly). “*Petit à petit l’oiseau fait son nid.*” Would that every county in England would follow the example of Lancashire, where free libraries exist in many villages! Would that in every district of this vast metropolis such rooms existed! We can hardly exaggerate the blessing they would be to multitudes of young people in business, and to our servants, who so often are separated from their families—those servants who do so much for our comfort, and for whose happiness and improvement we might, by taking thought, do more. In some places schoolrooms are used as libraries at night.

Variety gives zest to reading; and in study-

ing the papers, which tell us of the precious books that may be obtained for almost nominal prices, I have observed that works on serious subjects, practical knowledge, travels, biographies, and works of fiction, are mentioned. If we ask our friends to an entertainment, we take care that fare should be provided to suit different tastes; and in choosing food for the mind, we should act on the principle that change of ideas refreshes as much as change of scene. After a long hard day's work, many prefer fiction; and some imaginative works soften the heart and raise the tone of the mind. Those who can study the biographies of men and women who have lived nobly may find the best of companions in solitude. I conclude this chapter with a passage from an American writer:—

“We live by admiration, hope, and love. You can hardly take a better guide in your reading. What things to delight in with reverence, what things to hope for, what things to love deeply and purely—this is what you want from books and in books, just as from and in living persons. To pass through the simple experiences of human nature—the responsibilities, the hopes, the griefs, as well as the gladnesses that attach to our common lot; to taste them in their pureness, to bear them with quietness and courage, to do our work with all our heart—this is a great thing. To gain help for this is the great purpose in our reading, as in every friendship and all endeavour.”

CHAPTER III.

GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN FREQUENTERS OF READING-ROOMS—HINTS FOR HIGHER CLASS OF BOOKS.

IN the previous chapters I endeavoured to describe the rise and progress of reading-rooms, in the management of which economy had to be considered. I will now suppose that the library has been some time in existence, and that it has prospered. In order, however, that it should be successful, certain conditions must be observed in its management. I am very grateful to Mr Erle, of Millhall, Cuckfield, Sussex, who has had great experience in starting free libraries, for his kindness in allowing me to mention some of the results of his investigations as to the causes of success or failure. I quote his own words :—

“The first indispensable necessity for success in the management of a reading-room is to treat people as

friends, and to avoid, not only in form, but in the whole spirit of conduct, anything like drilling or patronage. According to my experience, which is very large indeed, readers will come gladly to any reading-room if it is made reasonably attractive (some are most dismal, bare, and forbidding), if they are handsomely treated, so far as the resources, however small they may be, permit, and if they are honestly welcomed, as guests in one's own house would be received. Rules must exist, but these should be simple and few, and there is no occasion to put them forth in what may be termed an aggressive form. I was much attacked for admitting, and, indeed, especially inviting, women and girls to my reading-room. My answer was, that it was for mothers to look after their children, but that to refuse opportunities of pleasure and improvement to girls which were given to men would be nothing less than outrageous."

It is impossible in writing on free libraries not to make frequent reference to the book by the chief librarian of the Birmingham libraries; and I observe that Mr Erle and he agree that there should be "perfect equality, no favour, and no jealousy." It is remarked that in these libraries "the men in corduroy are treated as gentlemen, and they behave as such." At the end of Mr Mullins's work is a catalogue of books suitable for a free lending library, ranging in price from 1s. to 7s. 6d. a volume. "This list," he tells us, "is not made upon any theory of what books people ought to read, but from

experience of what they will read." Selections might be made from the works he names, and several catalogues exist specially compiled of works suitable for lending libraries.

The gradual development of taste in many who steadily frequent free libraries is very remarkable. I hear that in soldiers' reading-rooms it often happens that the best histories are eagerly read. Mr Erle told me that in one of the reading-rooms he established he placed ten or twelve histories. He was sincerely anxious to find out what the people really liked to read, and occasionally went in during the dinner-hour to see what books were in use. He observed marks gradually travelling through two of the most solid—we will not say heavy—histories, and found one was being studied by the village plumber, the other by the carpenter.

A good many years ago, the late Mr Thomas Sopwith, manager of the lead mines, St John, started a free library for the miners. They paid an almost nominal subscription, and they were allowed to name what books they liked. At first many wrote down the titles of very trashy productions; but by degrees their taste improved, and in the course of a few years they grew to prefer standard works and writers such as Macaulay, so that the library gradually became a valuable one.

Sometimes those who provide books for working men do not recognise the great difference that exists between simplicity and childishness in the narratives they offer them. An honest, straightforward tale, whether of real life or of fiction, if told in clear, simple language, has fascinations for many. For instance, a gentleman kept a number of men and boys deeply interested for a considerable period by reading to them Dr Russell's 'Letters from the Crimea.' I am told that in America the taste for reading is far more widely developed than is the case in England. Free libraries are far more numerous. A small, cheap book, published in Putnam's handy book series, 'Hints for Home Reading,' contains a great many valuable suggestions embodied in twelve articles by different American writers, all of which are interesting to those who are pondering over the best means of cultivating a taste for literature among the people. The titles are suggestive; I take some at random. 'Plans of Reading,' by Hamlin; 'The Choice of Books,' Hale; 'How to Make Dull Boys Read,' and 'How to Preserve the Results of Reading,' by Cook; 'Hints for People that do not Read,' Abbott. At the end of this collection of short essays come suggestions for household libraries, by George Palmer Putnam, with priced lists (American money) of suggested

selections of 500, 1000, and 2000 volumes of the most important and desirable books. 'The Best Reading,' edited by Frederic Beecher Perkins, appears a most useful book. It is extraordinarily comprehensive—a sort of dictionary of excellent American and English works. It carries information down to 1881,—a smaller volume published later brings one down to the year 1882. These two American books were found for me by Messrs Stanford, Charing Cross. They contain lists of foreign works, and I am glad to see a catalogue of juvenile books. In Part II. of this remarkable work are Readings on reading, suggestions for courses of reading, a chapter on owning books, and hints on book clubs. I do not know whether many readers in our country would be courageous enough to undertake the course of reading indicated by Mr Perkins. Indeed, I think he himself entertains doubts as to people being heroic enough to do so; but I am sure few would read these articles without pleasure and profit. Among the books recommended in this work as indispensable are: (1) the Bible; (2) Webster's Dictionary; (3) Shakespeare; (4) Cruden's Concordance; (5) a History of the United States—Hildreth's, or, if too expensive, Willard's; (6) P. Smith's 'Student's Hume,' or Lossings' 'History of England;' (7) Taylor's 'Manual of His-

tory ;' (8) Dana's 'Household Book of Poetry.' 'The Book-Lover's Enchiridion, Thoughts on the Solace and Companionship of Books,' would be a treasure to every real lover of literature. After mentioning such a beautiful book, I feel I am very prosaic in referring to the fact that it is just appearing in a cheaper form. Those seeking to form an attractive library should certainly study the annual illustrated number of the 'Publisher's Circular,' Sotheran. The illustrations alone make it a wonderful shilling's worth, while every imaginable information about books may be gathered from it.

Some of those who frequent the library may wish to read in order to write. Let us hear what advice John Ruskin gives us:—

"No man is worth reading to form your style who does not mean what he says, nor was any great style ever invented but by some man who meant what he said. Find out the beginning of a great manner of writing, and you have also found the declarer of some true facts or sincere passions; and your whole method of reading will thus be quickened, for, being sure that your author really meant what he said, you will be much more careful to ascertain what it is that he means."

There are so many passages that I fain would quote in the 'Lectures on Art,' whence I have taken these words, that I must beg those of my

readers who can to refer to the original. The three first lectures more particularly I would suggest to those who love literature.

To readers who wish to gain some insight into various styles of English literature, I would strongly recommend Dr William Smith's 'Art of English Composition,' and his English Grammar. The delightful, but almost extinct, art of letter-writing, if more cultivated, would give great pleasure both to the writers and to the receivers of letters. The hints given by the Bishop of Rochester, in his book 'The Yoke of Christ,' on letter-writing, are eminently practical. He supplicates writers not to inflict too long letters on their correspondents, and to think what will interest them. I cannot resist saying that if persons writing to those with whom they are not acquainted would sign their names clearly, much confusion would be avoided.

If people, in writing letters, would try to bring themselves in mind face to face with those to whom they write, how charming their letters would often be. The thousand nothings of daily life are interesting to those correspondents who really care for each other. By reading Addison, Washington Irving, or Scott, over and over again, most people would acquire facility of expression. It was said by a French author that in writing a love letter one should begin

without knowing what one was going to say, and not remember at the conclusion what one has said. To be perfectly natural is the great secret of giving pleasure in writing to real friends. Accuracy of expression, conciseness, and graphic descriptive touches, constitute the qualities that are most sought for in letters to newspapers.

Books of travel are welcome in free libraries. Those who dwell in towns love to read of beautiful countries, and many look forward to the possibility of some day visiting fresh scenes. I know that I shall be considered too practical, but I think few works give more graphic accounts of our own counties and of foreign countries than Murray's handbooks. It must be remembered I am still thinking of what will interest readers belonging to the less well-to-do classes. If boxes of photographs illustrating the places mentioned could be placed near the books, I feel sure they would give real delight. Narratives like Mr Augustus Hare's 'Tour in Holland,' published in 'Good Words,' and his 'Italian Cities,' would charm the more cultivated. I was present at a Literary Fund dinner at which one of the guests mentioned that, having been prevented from taking a foreign trip, he recreated his mind by reading a succession of travels. Books like Mrs Comyns Carr's 'North Italian Folk Lore,' giving an account of the lives

of the peasants, are very delightful. I wish there were more writers on the lives of the country people of foreign lands.

An edition of Shakespeare in good print, Aikin's 'British Poets,' should be included in the library, and also many modern poets. Numbers of people belonging to the less educated classes love poetry—really good ballads, stirring verses, like Macaulay's 'Lays of Rome,' Longfellow's poems, and the Laureate's writings, are always appreciated. Pope, of course, must be earnestly studied. Ruskin says—

"You will find, as you study Pope, that he has expressed for you, in the strictest language, and within the briefest limits, every law of art, of criticism, of economy, of policy, and, finally, of a benevolence humble, rational, and resigned, contented with its allotted share of life, and trusting the problem of its salvation to Him in whose hand lies that of the universe."

As many persons, I have been assured, make a point of reading every new novel, it is consolatory to find that Sir John Herschel writes : "The novel, in its best form, I regard as one of the most powerful engines of civilisation ever invented." It is well known that statesmen, lawyers, and men who have to think hard all day, find relaxation in light novels, and hundreds of young men must have profited by the experiences of Thackeray's heroes.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE ADVANCED BOOKS FOR LARGER LIBRARIES.

IT used to be said that there was no royal road to learning, but in the present day there are many facilities afforded to students who have not much time at their disposal for acquiring the maximum of information with the minimum of trouble. I have already referred to Dr Smith's invaluable book, 'The Student's Hume.' 'The Student's Manual of English Literature,' by Shaw, edited by Dr Smith, who added notes and illustrations, would be a treasure to any one anxious to become familiar with our best authors. I think that 'Plain Living and High Thinking,' by Davenport Adams, is full of most useful suggestions—not only for a course of reading, but also for daily life. 'Living in Earnest,' by Johnson, is another excellent little work of the same character, but shorter. Messrs Cassell are publishing, in their magazine, 'Our Model Reading Club,'—hints

which, to judge from the character of their works, will probably be valuable.

‘Foreign Classics for English Readers,’ edited by Mrs Oliphant, written by the best authors, and published by Messrs Blackwood, contain the lives of Dante, Voltaire, Pascal, Petrarch, Goethe, Molière, Montaigne, Rabelais, Calderon, Saint Simon, Cervantes, Corneille and Racine, and Madame de Sévigné. Who that can be introduced to such a company of the wise, the witty, the imaginative, the good, and the tender, can ever feel dull? The volumes are short, but delightfully written, and are full of information. ‘Ancient Classics for English Readers,’ edited by Rev. W. Lucas Collins, give, as the ‘Saturday Review’ remarked, “an insight, exact as far as it goes, into those olden times, which are so remote, and yet to many of us so close.”

Among Christian biographies, by Sidney Lear, is ‘The Life of St Francis de Sales,’ in an abbreviated form; and there are beautiful collections of extracts from various French writers, compiled by the same author.

In referring to these works, I have had some regard to their moderate price. Larger historical books may by degrees be included in the library, and fuller biographies.

As an Englishwoman, I felt proud when a German gentleman of great literary attainments

told me that Lewes's 'Life of Goethe' was far the best in existence; and I believe Boswell's 'Life of Dr Johnson' is said to be one of the most complete of biographies. Lockhart's 'Life of Scott' is deeply interesting, and Trevelyan's 'Life of Macaulay' almost painfully so. The lives of Nelson and Wesley, by Southey, and 'The Life of Washington,' by Irving, should be carefully studied. Some autobiographies have great fascination; for instance, I have seen men quite absorbed in Trollope's account of his early trials, and his gradual rise to prosperity.

In a large library it is to be hoped that books by the great bishops and divines of our Church, and other good men of various schools of thought, will be included. So much light is being thrown upon Christian work year by year, that it would be very desirable to buy from time to time some of the writings of living lights of the Church.

Among the middle classes great interest is felt in missionary work. Many young women go from Scotland to teach the Indian ladies, and all relating to that sphere of labour is eagerly read. Accounts of America and Australia would also be much enjoyed. It is the dream of thousands to visit those great countries, as so many families now send out members to settle in some far colony. Practical books entering into

details as to the mode and the cost of life in lands to which emigration is directed,' would be read with absorbing interest.

There should also be records of what is being accomplished among the very poor, and histories of self-denying men and women who worked for the wretched, like John Howard, Elizabeth Fry, Wilberforce, Sister Dora, Miss Florence Nightingale, Harriett Monsell, Sarah Martin, Charles Lowder, Frederick Denison,—so many names crowd on the memory that I pause. They entertained widely different opinions, but they all obeyed the same great law, "Love one another."

In Chapter II. I mentioned various small treatises on cookery; but I have been told by experienced persons that prejudice exists among the less well-to-do against trying new ways of preparing food, and that time is too valuable to many a hurried mother to enable her to make experiments. Still there must be a beginning, and I cannot give up hoping that a few books on simple creature-comforts might do good.

Country people whose occupations take them much into the open air are often keen observers of nature, and books on natural history, ornithology, and botany are eagerly read by them. Some fine collections have been made by naturalists engaged in work that some might suppose

would take up all their time; but of several instances I recall, I will only refer to Mr Mackintosh, letter-carrier, of Inver, near Dunkeld, whose collection is said to be most interesting and complete. He and his brother are proficient in music, and train a choir. Descriptions of animal life, such as are given in 'The Animal World,' possess great attraction for many persons. Mrs Burton's untiring efforts to protect dumb creatures from suffering should be extensively known. I believe that kindness to animals is much more general than formerly; the mutual affection between Scotch shepherds and their collie dogs is proverbial; and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts's persevering labours in England have produced an excellent understanding between many owners of donkeys and their animals.

The value of the libraries would in small towns and villages be greatly enhanced if courses of lectures were held. In order to render this possible, however, there must be a spacious room available. Miss Weston has a large hall in connection with her institute at Devonport, where religious meetings are held without interfering with the secular branch. Mr Ingram, of the Gardens, Belvoir, who has delivered many interesting lectures to large audiences, and has a great knowledge of the

needs of the rural population, writes that he has felt it would be most useful if there could be a hall in every village, where meetings, concerts, lectures, and entertainments could be given. I have seen almost the whole population on *fête* days sitting to hear the fine military bands in Germany; and there are still dancing-greens in many foreign places where young people waltz, with the full approval of their parents. But in the vast majority of small towns and villages in our country the public-house is still the only place where a little festivity can be held; even if our climate allowed of outdoor gatherings, open spaces are not available for such recreative purposes. I fear some will say, What have music and dancing to do with reading and recreation rooms? Only this, that we must avail ourselves, as far as possible, of every means to draw people from places where temptations beset them. In many public-houses music is found to draw greatly. The same old tunes are played night after night, and are applauded rapturously at exactly the same places. Those who have assisted at concerts for the poor can testify to the delight shown when songs are given with feeling, or instrumental music played with spirit.

The secretary of the National Thrift Society, Mr Bowden Green, in 'Eastward Ho!' refers

to the fact that the meetings of benefit clubs are generally held at public-houses, and if the investment of sixpence or a shilling is accompanied by the expenditure of twopence or threepence, there is not much thrift about the transaction. If, by arrangement, the club meetings could be held at a village hall or reading-room, there would be no necessity for any expenditure for the good of the house.

The reading-room must be made cheerful and attractive. I have seen much accomplished by having pink instead of white wash, a small looking-glass framed in crimson cloth, a few cushions of the same warm colouring, and some plants, cut flowers, or even berries in winter. Occasionally a little exhibition of pictures might be held, either in the reading-room or the village hall, or an industrial exhibition of work done by local men, women, and children. The love of the poorer classes for pictures and illustrations is well known.

The necessity for a great increase in the number of reading and recreation rooms becomes daily more urgent. The school boards are educating the young highly, and inculcating a taste for reading. Is it not of the utmost importance that, on entering life, those who have been educated up to a high standard should find facilities for keeping up the knowledge acquired so pain-

fully, sometimes with great risk to health? In France free libraries are almost universal; in Switzerland the greatest pains are taken to render them efficient; and I hear that the public library at Geneva has issued a catalogue intended to serve as a guide in the formation of similar institutions.

In some places it has been proved to be of great advantage to the community to have reading-rooms open on Sunday. Multitudes of young men and women, away from their homes engaged in business, have no place in which to spend many hours of the Day of Rest, except in the streets. Mr Sutherst gives a graphic picture of the discomforts of Sunday to the larger proportion of shop assistants in his book 'Disease and Death behind the Counter.' In a paper I wrote in the 'National Review' of August, "A Plea for the Emancipation of certain English Bondmen and Women," I have given extracts from various writers, hoping to bring this subject to the notice of those who can provide places where rest on the seventh day may be enjoyed by those at a distance from their homes. Mr Erle opened his reading-room in the country on Sunday. He found that some of his Dissenting neighbours objected to this course being taken, on the ground that the people would read the newspapers or secular books. Mr Erle pointed

out the advantages of inducing those who would not attend evening church or chapel to spend their time quietly, where, at all events, they would be kept out of mischief; still opposition was offered by the Nonconformist body. He then offered, in deference to the views of right and wrong entertained by a large section of his neighbours, to meet them half-way, and to arrange a large shutter, by means of which all the "secular" books could be kept out of reach on a Sunday, and he also proposed to add to the religious books very largely. The compromise was accepted. From that moment the library became the only ground on which the clergy of all denominations in that neighbourhood would meet or communicate. To quote Mr Erle's words :—

"A reading-room means a great deal, far more than the mere words indicate. The existence of such a place supplies both a spot where meetings can be held for all sorts of pleasant and worthy purposes, and it is a sort of standing incitement towards enterprises of the kind. . . . The reading-room here became a sort of source of life and light to the whole district."

It is most important to have careful custodians; and it should not be difficult to find respectable persons who will take the office in turn for a small sum, and from a wish to do good.

The new year would indeed be a happy new year if it inaugurated the commencement of a period when every man, woman, and child might be welcome to share in the pure and profitable pleasures of well-chosen books. Then, in the words of Talfourd—

“The solitary leisure of the clerk, of the shopman, of the apprentice, of the overseer, of every worker in all departments of labour, from the highest to the lowest, shall be gladdened at will by those companions to whom the serene creators of immortal things in verse and prose have given him perpetual introduction, and who will never weary, betray, or forsake him.”

CHAPTER V.

FREE LIBRARIES IN VILLAGES AND SMALL TOWNS.

EVERY one recognises the practical utility of a magnificent free library like the one at Birmingham. In reality the humblest village reading-room is, in its sphere, accomplishing a work of equal value. It is difficult for educated, well-to-do persons to imagine the monotony of the existence led by agricultural labourers in villages and small hamlets. In summer they usually begin work about half-past six, and they leave off towards half-past five; in winter they cease at dusk. If the only place of recreation open to them in the village is the public-house, thither, of course, must those men repair who desire a little companionship from time to time. If the men are single, and live in lodgings, they feel the need of a change more than the married men, who, however, often find an hour or two out desirable.

In many rural places attempts are being

made to provide reading-rooms. There is always some risk in attempting combinations, but one good work generally helps another, and I think if coffee-houses could be provided with books and newspapers, their success would be much extended. In the part of Leicestershire where I am writing are many villages. Reading-rooms and coffee-rooms have been started in several of them, usually by their clergymen. Mr Ebsworth, formerly rector of Croxton, opened the schoolroom as a reading-room in the evening, with the happiest results. This plan is frequently adopted in America, and is advised by Mr Mullins, in his book on "Free Libraries," when other arrangements are not found so easy to carry out. It certainly offers many advantages. I must, however, express a hope that great care will be taken to have the schoolrooms thoroughly well ventilated before they are occupied as reading-rooms. It would be a wise precaution to leave the windows open during the night. There is now a coffee-room at Croxton, where the present rector, Mr Booker, and Mrs Booker, give free concerts once a fortnight. This is indeed a most admirable and kind undertaking. Canon Norman and Lady Adeliza are establishing a library in the coffee-house they set up at Bottesford. They have suggested to friends who are interested that

each should send a book, and I think they will soon find the shelves overflow. At Woolsthorpe a reading-room has been opened by the rector, Mr Gillet, which, it is hoped, may be useful not only to the inhabitants of that prettily situated secluded village, but also to the men who are now engaged in its neighbourhood in excavating the iron-stone. These men leave off work when their shift is done. As they sometimes “get through” by half-past three, they have many hours on their hands; and it is pleasant to think that there is a room where they can rest and enjoy a book or paper. At Branston—another pretty neighbouring village—encouraged by the rector, Mr Stanley, a respectable woman is starting a recreation-room for the labourers. Several persons in the vicinity are sending her books for a small library. She intends selling coffee, and hopes to make the men feel quite at home. Mrs John Welby’s room at Allington, to which I referred before, was almost the first established in this neighbourhood. Probably its success encouraged others to provide these rooms, which must give great pleasure to the people. I think it best to mention only a few instances of village rooms that have come under my observation.

About half an hour by rail from Belvoir Castle, where I write, at Newark, is the remark-

able coffee-house founded by Lady Ossington in memory of her husband, who was many years Speaker of the House of Commons. It comprises very fine reading-rooms and every imaginable arrangement for the comfort of the public. Mr Gilstrap, with great munificence, presented a library to this fortunate town.

I have often thought that village reading-rooms might be modelled on soldiers' libraries. I am indebted to Mr Charles Manners for the following particulars concerning them:—

“The furniture is simple. There are barrack-tables, with Windsor chairs; but there are many pictures and prints, given by officers on leaving. The men play games—bagatelle, billiards, dominoes, draughts, &c.; and the whole affair is managed by a committee of officers and non-commissioned officers. A sergeant is appointed as librarian, and is put in charge. No alcoholic stimulants are allowed.”

I am told that the soldiers' libraries are extremely appreciated by the men, and are never empty. If large farmers could provide something of the kind for their labourers, it is believed great advantages would result to masters and men.

I cannot help wishing that books might be provided in every workhouse. Lady Brabazon's truly wise and benevolent scheme for supplying the women with working materials, must have

proved a blessing to many a poor lonely creature. The men in the wards who cannot employ their fingers might beguile the weary hours in reading, if suitable books were provided; and probably much quarelling—the great curse of workhouse life—would be avoided if the inmates' minds could be occupied.

Some years ago we took a tour in the West Highlands: in that wild, beautiful country the people dwell in shielings far apart. A few huts on the shores of the Sound of Mull still exist, the same in appearance as those described in Dr Johnson's 'Tour to the Hebrides.' In this romantic region the late Lord Howard built capital cottages on his estate, Dorlin. He went constantly among the people, taking the greatest interest in them, giving them employment, and helping them in every way. He told me that in winter it was their custom to assemble alternately at each other's houses, where, crowding round the fire, without light except that afforded by the flickering flames, they took it in turn to tell each other stories, which were listened to with rapt attention. I do not know if our English peasantry would find amusement in listening to tales told by one of their number, but they certainly should be given opportunities of knowing something of life beyond their villages.

Among mining and colliery populations reading and recreation rooms are of the utmost value. The men usually earn good wages, and unless opportunities are given them for profitable amusement, they are tempted to waste their hard-earned money.

Sir Arthur Helps writes in his essay, 'Improvement of the Condition of Rural Poor,'—"Often all that a man wants in order to accomplish something that it is good for him to do, is the encouragement of another man's sympathy." I would beg any one who may be thinking of establishing a reading-room, lending library, or recreation-room, to enlist as many workers of different classes as possible.

Lord Beaconsfield once said to me, in speaking of the discouragement felt by many at the dullness attending the details of the beginnings of official life,—“All details are dry; the first steps in every profession must be monotonous.” Nothing, however, can be accomplished without attention to details. Letters—often almost innumerable letters—must be written, circulars printed, explanations given over and over again, committee meetings held, hours and hours passed, very likely in stuffy rooms, discussing points on which every one differs, before the first step of such an undertaking can be taken. Objections

are sure to be raised to any scheme. These will appear ridiculous to the promoters, but no sign of impatience must be shown. By tact and courtesy, objective persons may be converted into most zealous supporters. When at last the long-cherished idea is carried out—when the reading or recreation room is actually opened—we must redouble our efforts instead of relaxing them, in order to make it successful. Its existence must be made known, as far as possible, to every one whom it may concern. Handbills must be sent round, or as many as the room can hold might be invited to a free entertainment; it must be advertised as widely as possible. We must bear in mind that in the lives of hard-working men the expenditure of even a few pence is a matter of importance, and many believe that free libraries are the most desirable. I must once more quote from Mr Mullins's book, 'Free Libraries':—

“By the provisions of the Free Libraries Act of 1866, it is possible for small towns or villages, whose resources would not enable them to organise and sustain a free library for themselves, to join, by arrangement and payment of some small sum, the nearest town possessing a free library, and have books from the same, either by sending for them to the central depot or by having cases of books sent at certain times to some person appointed to receive and issue them at the place where they are required.”

It would therefore seem that, were it possible to establish Free Libraries in all towns, they would become centres of intellectual light to the surrounding villages; and the blessings that we might reasonably expect to result from the diffusion of pure literature all over the country cannot be over-estimated.

Until the dawning of that bright, and I trust not distant day, let us eagerly seize what opportunities we can for hastening it, by encouraging every existing institution. In many places there are parochial libraries to which we can subscribe for our dependants. The Christian Knowledge Society, the National Society, the Pure Literature, the Religious Tract, and other societies, publish countless interesting works, which are sold to subscribers on very moderate terms. Almost every personal gift or acquirement may be turned to account for this great cause — the emancipation of thousands from the bondage of ignorance and idleness. Not by fitful outbursts of enthusiasm will that great object be accomplished, but by steady, sympathetic, and continuous effort, sustained by the belief that for the struggling masses and ourselves wisdom is better than gold. The presence of those who devote themselves to such a cause would, in the words of a Scotch divine, be like sunrise.

CHAPTER VI.

FREE LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA—THE ‘BOOK-
LOVER’S ENCHIRIDION.’

IN Australia, and in many of our colonies, the necessity for providing food for the mind of the people is fully recognised. Through the kindness of Sir Samuel Wilson, who procured the information for me, I am able to mention some facts that may interest those who share the belief of a great statesman, that the future of the world lies in those magnificent countries at the antipodes. The Melbourne Public Library is the finest in Victoria, and, indeed, in all the Australian colonies. Government defrayed the cost of the building, which amounted to £111,604, and supplied further sums for books, &c., amounting to £344,089. It has received private contributions of books and pamphlets valued at £15,000. This library is entirely free, and open to the public from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. on week-days. Over a quarter

of a million of all classes of people avail themselves of its privileges during the year. There are free libraries, athenæums, scientific, literary, or mechanics' institutes in most of the towns of Victoria, and the Melbourne Public Library supplies books on loan to many of these. They receive some support from Government. £7682 were distributed amongst them in 1882, and private contributions amounted to about £290,000; and they have about three millions of visitors during the year—that is to say, three millions of people have the opportunity of educating themselves, free of expense, in this enlightened country. Besides the noble public library, there is a free library connected with the Patent Office in Melbourne; and there is also a valuable library in the Supreme Court, Melbourne, with branches in each assize town of Victoria, which are free to members of the legal profession.

In America, libraries and reading-rooms seem essential parts of the social system. It is fitting that the countrymen of Washington, of Emerson, of Washington Irving, and of Longfellow, should value books.

Almost everywhere in Germany there are free libraries, and it is astonishing how many of the poorer classes read English in places where tourists penetrate—and where do they not? But standard literature in the country of Goethe,

Schiller, and Humboldt is not yet published extensively in forms at once good and inexpensive. Though at Florence there is a fine national library, and at Venice a marvellous collection of archives, yet in Italy free reading-rooms do not seem to be frequently established. In that lovely country, perhaps, the book of nature is so attractive that the inhabitants find their chief pleasure in its study. In Switzerland, Government gives great encouragement to libraries, and in France they are universal.

Perhaps some of us may live to see the day when the dwellers in the mother country may enjoy the privileges of those in her colonies; for it is believed that many hearts have thrilled in response to this aspiration of Ruskin, which I cannot help quoting:—

“I hope it will not be long before royal or national libraries will be founded in every considerable city, with a royal series of books in them; the same series in every one of them, chosen books, the best in every kind, prepared for that national series in the most perfect way possible, their text printed all on leaves of equal size, broad of margin, and divided into pleasant volumes, light in the hand, beautiful and strong, and thorough as examples of the binder’s work; and that these great libraries will be accessible to all clean and orderly persons at all times of the day and evening, strict law being enforced for this cleanliness and quietness.”

One of the chief difficulties of the founders of libraries has been the choice of books. A national plan of reading would indeed be a boon to the people. While we are placed in widely differing circumstances, yet certain laws rule us all, one event must happen to us all, and there are certain facts which we should all endeavour to learn. And so there are some books that should, if possible, be read by all, whatever their position in life; for we should read with the object of fitting ourselves to act wisely, and to bear with fortitude the trials that sooner or later must come to every one of us. It is to be feared that many people take up a book as they would a cigarette, regarding both as soothing means of enabling them to doze away an idle half hour. Some, too, avowedly read that they may have something to talk about.

As many of those who may glance at these pages may not have leisure to dive for themselves among the treasures to be found in the 'Book-Lover's Enchiridion,' I will quote a few of the passages that its compiler has gathered with such care, beginning with one from Sir Matthew Hale (1609-1676):—

"Read the Bible reverently and attentively, set your heart upon it, and lay it up in your memory and make it the direction of your life; it will make you a wise and good man. I have been acquainted somewhat

with men and books, and have had long experience in learning and in the world. There is no book like the Bible for excellent learning, wisdom, and use, and it is want of understanding in them that think or speak otherwise."

Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) :—

"If thou wilt receive profit, read with humility, simplicity, and faith, and seek not at any time the fame of being learned."

Isaac Barrow (1630-1677) :—

"The reading of books, what is it but conversing with the wisest men of all ages and all countries, who thereby communicate to us their most deliberate thoughts, choicest notions, and best inventions, couched in good expression, and digested in exact method? . . . Now doth it supply the room of experience, and furnish us with prudence at the expense of others."

Sir Richard Steele (1671-1729) :—

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

Addison in the 'Spectator' :—

"Knowledge of books in a man of business is a torch in the hands of one who is willing and able to show those who are bewildered the way which leads to prosperity and welfare."

Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773) :—

"Throw away none of your time upon those trivial futile books, published by idle and necessitous authors

for the amusement of idle and ignorant readers; such sort of books swarm and buzz about one every day; flop them away, they have no sting. . . . Rise early, and at the same hour every morning, how late soever you may have sat up the night before; this secures you an hour or two at least of reading or reflection before the common interruptions of the morning begin."

Countess de Genlis (1746-1830):—

"Books are a guide in youth, and an entertainment for age. They support us under solitude, and keep us from becoming a burden to ourselves. They help us to forget the crossness of men and things, compose our cares and our passions, and lay our disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the living we may repair to the dead, who have nothing of peevishness, pride, or design in their conversation."

William Cobbett (1762-1835):—

"Books never annoy, they cost little, and they are always at hand and ready at your call. . . . A journal should be kept by every young man. Put down something every day, if it be merely a description of the weather. You will not have done this for a year without finding the benefit of it. It demands not more than a minute in the twenty-four hours, and that minute is most agreeably and advantageously employed."

Jean Paul F. Richter (1763-1825):—

"A scholar has no *ennui*."

Isaac Disraeli (1767-1848):—

"Those authors who appear sometimes to forget they

are writers, and remember they are men, will be our favourites. He who writes from the heart will write to the heart."

Lord Mahon, Philip Henry Stanhope (1791-1872):—

"See how little the man who can rely on the pleasures of reading is dependent on the caprice or the will of his fellow-men. . . . Of the pleasures of reading, I will say that there is no man so high as to be enabled to dispense with them, and no man so humble who should be compelled to forego them."

Sir John Herschel (1792-1871):—

"Now, of all the amusements which can possibly be imagined for a hard-working man, after his daily toil, or in its intervals, supposing him to have a taste for it, and supposing him to have the book to read. . . . It relieves his home of its dullness and sameness, which, in nine cases out of ten, is what drives him out to the alehouse, to his own ruin and his family's. I recollect an anecdote told me by a late highly-respected inhabitant of Windsor, as a fact to which he could personally testify, having occurred in a village where he resided several years, and where he actually was at the time it took place. The blacksmith of the village had got hold of Richardson's novel of 'Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded,' and used to read it aloud in the long summer evenings, seated on his anvil, and never failed to have a large and attentive audience. It is a pretty long-winded book; but then patience was fully a match for the author's prolixity, and they fairly listened to it all. At length, when the happy turn of fortune arrived,

which brings the hero and heroine together, and sets them living long and happily, according to the most approved rules, the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and procuring the church keys, actually set the parish bells ringing."

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) :—

"No book, I believe, except the Bible, has been so universally read and loved by Christians of all tongues and sects as Thomas à Kempis's 'De Imitatione Christi.' The writer of a book, is not he a preacher, preaching not to this parish or that, on this day or that, but to all men, in all times and places? I many a time say the writers of newspapers, pamphlets, poems, books, these are the real working, effective Church of a modern country."

Lord Lytton (1803-1873) :—

"Light reading does not do when the heart is really heavy. I am told that Goethe, when he lost his son, took to study a science that was new to him. Ah! Goethe was a physician who knew what he was about. In a great grief like that you cannot tickle and divert the mind, you must wrench it away, abstract, absorb—bury it in an abyss, hurry it into an labyrinth. Therefore, for the irremediable sorrows of middle life and old age, I recommend a strict chronic course of science and hard reasoning. Counter irritation brings the brain to act upon the heart!"

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) :—

"Many times the reading of a book has made the fortune of the man, has decided his way of life; it

makes friends; 'tis the tie between men to have been delighted with the same book. . . . Whenever I have to do with young men and women," he said, "I always wish to know what their books are. I wish to defend them from bad; I wish to introduce them to good."

William Ewart Gladstone (born 1809)—
Speech at the Royal Academy dinner, 1877 :—

"It was said of Socrates that he called down philosophy from heaven. But the enterprise of certain enlightened publishers has taught them to work for the million, and that is a very important fact. When I was a boy I used to be fond of looking into a book-seller's shop, but there was nothing to be seen there that was accessible to the working men of that day. Take a Shakespeare, for example. I remember very well that I gave £2, 16s. for my first copy, but you can get an admirable copy for 3s. These books are accessible now which formerly were quite inaccessible."

Lord Lytton, Owen Meredith (born 1831) :—

"It is, however, not to the museum, or the lecture-room, or to the drawing-school, but to the library, that we must go for the completion of our humanity."

Lord Beaconsfield (1805-1881) :—

"It is knowledge that equalises the social condition of man—that gives to all, however different their political position, passions which are in common, and enjoyments which are universal."

Anonymous author :—

“It is really an appalling thing to think of the people who have no books. . . . Yet there are thousands and tens of thousands of homes where these influences never reach.”

In quoting these passages, I have felt tempted to extract whole pages, but I must not exceed my limits. In the next chapter I propose entering into some further details of a practical character on the establishment and maintenance of reading, recreation rooms, and free libraries. At this moment, when many are reading with deep interest the life of George Eliot, it may not be amiss to recall the passage in which she writes :—

“No political institution will alter the nature of ignorance, or hinder it from producing vice and misery. Let ignorance start how it will, it must run the same round of low appetites, poverty, slavery, and superstition.”¹

¹ ‘Essays by George Eliot,’ p. 343.

CHAPTER VII.

PRELIMINARY STEPS BEFORE COMPLETION OF THE
BIRNAM INSTITUTE—DETAILS OF OTHER READ-
ING-ROOMS—ENEMIES OF BOOKS.

IN Miss Octavia Hill's interesting book, 'Homes of the London Poor,' nothing is more impressive than the manner in which, step by step, she leads those she visits to wish to help themselves. The labour she underwent must have been enormous, her courage undaunted. From every page we might learn lessons of patience and perseverance. Such lessons must be taken to heart by those who would establish and maintain either of the institutions that I am advocating.

Though in the first chapter I referred to the Birnam Institute, so many questions have been put as to the preliminary steps leading to its gradual development, that I will endeavour to explain how the undertaking began and continued.

Many visitors from distant parts of the world go to Birnam, which is an hour's journey from Perth, at the foot of Birnam Hill, on the banks of the Tay, and within half a mile of the beautiful Dunkeld grounds. It is, in fact, the entrance to the Highlands.

A working men's club was started in 1876. The member's subscription was 3s. a-year. In winter Birnam is not much more populous than one of those lovely Swiss villages which in summer become cosmopolitan, and in the cold months are deserted; and after a time the funds languished. When the visitors were enjoying the autumn, a happy thought occurred to some of the committee. "Let us have a concert for the benefit of the club." This idea was carried out, under the management of a lady (Mrs Dickie), who, during seven years, directed all the musical entertainments in aid of the club. To every one's surprise and delight, the sum of £40 was realised by the first concert. By the year 1883 the number of members had increased so largely that the premises were far too small. During the seven years of the club's existence, however, the sympathies of many had been enlisted in maintaining its prosperity. The clergy of the several denominations were most kind, and all the proprietors in the neighbourhood

and visitors showed much interest in the movement.

Mr Kinnaird, the stationmaster at Birnam, who was its chief promoter, from the first took an infinite amount of trouble ; so did the hard-worked schoolmaster, Mr Wallace, and Mr Stewart, a young tradesman ; while Mr Murray, a painter, gave much of his time and skill ; and Mr Ellis, a retired business man, also helped the undertaking greatly. The son of the postmaster, Mr Low, for a long time proved a most efficient custodian of the small collection of books ; indeed, active help was given by all. Mr Pople, the proprietor of the Birnam hotel, assisted very generously in every way. If concerts were to be given, ladies and gentlemen, and the lads and lasses of the country-side, gave help in the kindest manner ; and the support accorded by the inhabitants of Dunkeld and Birnam must have satisfied the greediest manager of amateur performances. I really hope these concerts, which took place frequently, gave pleasure to the audiences, as I know they did to some of the performers. Especially when first started, simple music was chosen, but great trouble was taken that there should be no pauses. The performers were expected to "come up to time." There is a pretty and lofty hall in Dunkeld, and thither did we of

Birnam trudge to the concerts on many a starlight night, crossing the bridge over the beautiful Tay. The audience was invariably kind; but when their own Scotch ballads were sung they became enthusiastic, while songs like "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" always brought down the house. The glee and chorus singing, conducted by Mr Mackintosh, the letter-carrier, was much enjoyed. Though the prices charged were sometimes exceedingly low, yet from first to last a considerable sum was raised by these entertainments.

When Sir Douglas Stewart of Grandtully and Murthly granted a site in an excellent situation on the road leading to the station, on favourable terms, universal pleasure was felt. It was then determined to build the Birnam Institute, consisting—1. Of a reading-room, library, and other suitable accommodation for the Birnam Working Men's Club; 2. A hall of moderate dimensions for local meetings, entertainments, and other public purposes; 3. A public coffee-room, for the sale of refreshments and non-intoxicating beverages. The cost, about £1000, to be defrayed by subscription, and a bazaar. A small committee was appointed to act with Mr Kinnaird to carry out the scheme. I enter into these details, as they may guide others. At the bazaar the exertions made by the ladies

were very great. Lady Stewart came daily ; and Mrs Reid, who lived in the neighbourhood for the shooting season, actually left her own house, and went to an hotel, where she remained in the town while the bazaar lasted. Myriads of roses were sent by Mr Gray. It went on day and night, that is, till long after ten, as the poor people, mostly hard-working men and women, could only come in the evening.

The Institute was opened at the end of September 1883, but much had to be accomplished before it was in working order. The account I have given does not enter into the many difficulties that had to be met, or into the differences of opinion that existed on many points, especially as to whether a hall would answer. I confess that I could not believe that sufficient money would be forthcoming for a hall. Now, I think every one agrees that the hall has been the most important element in the success that, the promoters are thankful to say, has hitherto attended the Birnam Institute. During the winter of 1883-84 the concerts were continued, and during the summer the Institute was visited by a large number, and teas were provided for hundreds. The coffee-room, or rather bar, is too small ; but when large parties arrive from Dundee or Perth, arrangements are made by which they are supplied in one of the

larger rooms. In this department valuable help was given by the proprietor of the Railway Hotel, Inverness, Signor Cesari, who more than once came himself to give advice, besides sending assistants. He also sent all sorts of requisites to start the commissariat department, and gave the proper scale of charges. Ladies often find it agreeable to spend any spare time they may have in waiting for the trains in the reading-room, to which strangers not belonging to the club are admitted on paying twopence. The respectable couple who have charge of the Institute know exactly how five o'clock tea should be sent up, and this is found an advantage. When teas have been given on any special occasion to the poor, the farmers send in literally buckets of delicious milk. Cows that feed on the moorlands are said to give sweeter milk than those fed in the ordinary way.

On certain days in the year—for instance, on that when the Birnam games take place—many thousands arrive by excursion trains; then the Institute is thronged by hungry and thirsty sightseers, and much tact and firmness are necessary, as it is not uncommon for some to come in who have been taking something stronger than tea. When we arrived at Birnam in August, I was overjoyed to see a pretty lawn

surrounding the Institute, and some very comfortable seats under the trees, given by Mrs Howard, a resident lady. The interest the people themselves took, and I trust still take, in the Institute, accounts for its success. Kind ladies and gentlemen also lent their personal help in giving attractive entertainments. The Episcopalian clergyman, the Rev. J. W. Hunter, and Mrs Hunter (a lady of great musical gifts), the Rev. Thomas Rutherford (minister of the Established Church) and Mrs Rutherford, the Rev. David Macpherson and Mrs Macpherson, besides many other ministers, gave up much of their valuable time to encourage the musical meetings, or popular evenings, that gave pleasure to crowded audiences.

In Dunkeld a cosy little reading-room was established by Bailie Jack.

Pitlochry, some miles further north on the Highland line, is fortunate in having a coffee-room and a recreation-ground. It may seem to many that Scotland is one vast recreation-ground, with its beautiful hills and valleys; but in reality the benefit of a place set apart for games in its villages is incalculable. If I had my wish there should, where it is possible, be a recreation-ground in connection with every reading-room. But I well remember that people who want too much don't get anything. Seven years

seems a long time for the maturing of plans connected with such an Institute as the first I have been describing; but, to borrow an American expression, it was rather a “big thing” for a small place.

I will now touch on a smaller undertaking that seems likely to prosper. Mrs Wodehouse, Gotham Rectory, Kegworth, Derby, a short time ago opened the village school in the evening as a reading-room. For two years she had earnestly wished to do this. The greatest expense in starting was to have a partition in the school in order to enable the upper part to be used for meetings without disturbing the readers. The population is 1060. In the course of about a week it was found there were sixty-eight members, and in addition twelve or fourteen came every evening, who paid a halfpenny for coming. I think it is a very good plan to allow visitors to spend the evening in the reading-room for that small sum. They see what is offered them, and often join after satisfying themselves that they will find comfort. Mrs Wodehouse collected enough money for the first start—including two good hanging lamps and four cheaper ones, a second-hand bagatelle board (which cost two guineas), and about £2 worth of other games, dominoes, draughts, with tables specially provided for the

men to play on. Five penny papers a-day are taken in. The papers are afterwards sold. There are little expenses for cleaning and lighting and warming. The former costs about 4s., and the latter about 2s. each weekly. This is supposed to be a temporary arrangement till it appears prudent to start a special room.

The Girls' Friendly Societies have recreation-rooms in many places. I give an account of one of them in the words of a member: "Oh, my lady, the room is so comfortable and pleasant! They have nice books and papers. It is so nice for me when I can go there. Father and mother live too far off for me to go home often. The ladies do talk to us so kindly, and we had such a nice tea the other evening. It costs so little, too,—only a halfpenny a-week." Then the girl tripped off with such a beaming face, I quite longed for the ladies, whose names I do not know, to have seen her.

In providing books for a reading-room or lending library, it is most desirable to have a few, at all events, in good print. At certain times of the year the great London circulating libraries sell second-hand copies of their books at marvellously low prices. Those readers who find the print of the very cheap editions too trying would appreciate the larger type. The other day, in a paper "On the Influence of Civili-

sation upon Eyesight," Mr R. Brudenell Carter, F.R.C.S., stated that many of the school-books now in use should be abandoned, and new editions prepared in type of at least twice the size and of greater legibility—this latter point depending upon the shape and design of the letters. I have lately seen some standard reading-books for the young, published by Blackwood, printed in very clear type, and the more advanced contain selections made with great taste.

Having obtained a certain number of books, how to place them in safety, yet where they will be easily accessible, is the next question. I have studied a very interesting work, 'The Enemies of Books,' by Blades, with the view of learning all I can on this subject. The cheap edition is, unfortunately, out of print. It contains ten chapters, each devoted to one of the chief enemies of books. Though the latter chapters apply chiefly to old and rare tomes, the earlier ones show us how to guard against dangers common to all books. I think all who have books in their keeping should study this quaint and useful publication. I learn from it that fire, water, gas and heat, dust and neglect, ignorance, the bookworm, other vermin, bookbinders and collectors, are their principal foes. The author bids us remember that "the surest way to preserve your books in

health is to treat them as you should your own children, who are sure to sicken if confined in an atmosphere which is impure, too hot, too cold, too damp, or too dry. It is just the same with the progeny of literature." Sometimes water-pipes leak in the most unaccountable manner. I saw only the other day a little stream suddenly gurgle down some beautiful satin hangings on the walls of a drawing-room. Great attention should be paid to pipes near a library. Occasionally a window is left open in a storm, and driving rain damages the books. But damp is the most insidious foe the librarian has to encounter. As Mr Blades tells us, "water in the form of vapour is a great enemy of books, the damp attacking both outside and inside." He considers glass doors to bookcases are not so good as ornamental brass wire-work; the latter allow of ventilation.

I will not dwell on the injury done to books by gas and heat, as in small reading-rooms, I fear, to a certain extent, they must be considered necessary evils. The author tells us that the library illumination of the future promises to be the electric light. I fear that in many private libraries the periodical spring and autumn dustings are seasons of sore trial to the book lover, and that often the dust is only superficially removed; while there are painful instances

of books being replaced topsy-turvy and sets scattered. Bookworms, I find, object to feed on modern volumes, as the paper is adulterated; they prefer rare old books. Several varieties exist of the so-called bookworm. One, called the *Anobium*, eats the wooden boards of old books, and so passes into the paper; one is said to have so pierced twenty-seven volumes in a straight line. Rats sometimes gnaw books when hard pressed by hunger.

The bookbinder would hardly be included among the list of enemies to modern books; yet much care should be exercised in rebinding even common ones. Nor need the collector be dreaded in the ordinary library; but, on the other hand, the borrowers of books must be frequently and carefully admonished to be particular in handling and in returning any books committed to their keeping, whether single volumes or parts of sets. Books in a lending library are intended for the good of the community, and each member of it ought to take an interest in their preservation. However small the collection of books, they should be classified.

Ventilation ought to be attended to in all reading and recreation rooms. There may be opposition at first to the admission of fresh air, but if draughts are carefully avoided, and if a

good fire is kept up, the frequenters will soon grow to prefer a fresh warm atmosphere to a stuffy cold one.

The choice of a person or persons to take charge of the reading-room is all-important. In small village reading or recreation rooms it might be found well to employ a nice motherly woman, who would welcome the readers. The experience of the ladies who superintended the Parochial Mission women proves that often a matronly kindly woman of the lower middle class is able to render great help, because she understands what is needed by working people. It is just as well, however, to have a man within call, as sometimes the spirits of the hobbledehoy become rather uproarious.

I am sorry to say that some poor persons find great difficulty in writing letters. I do not mean so much in forming the characters as in thinking what to say. In Italy there are professional letter-writers, who are much employed by the peasants. If occasionally a kind person, after becoming friendly with the frequenters of a reading-room, were to offer to write "home" at their dictation, I think the offer would be accepted gratefully. In the refreshment and recreation tents established by Miss Robinson at Dartmoor and Cannock Chase

during the autumn manœuvres in 1873, about 5600 letters were written by the soldiers and 240 post-office orders sent.

I have been asked how I find books for reading-rooms. When I am in London, I poke about at the best booksellers belonging to the various schools of thought. I have, however, found it an easier plan to pore over the volume of the 'Annual Publishers' Circular,' and then to write to Mr Pratt, stationer, 98 Albany Street, Regent's Park, London, who has spared me all the trouble of procuring books, magazines, and papers from the different publishers, and of despatching them to the various reading-rooms and persons for whom I am in the habit of ordering them. Now and then in choosing books I make mistakes, but, on the other hand, I sometimes find publications exactly suitable for those they are intended to interest. My only excuse for having entered into these details is that for a long time past I have been receiving many inquiries on these points. I earnestly trust that some writers more competent to treat of these subjects will now take them up, for I feel how much is left unsaid. I have not worked myself, but I have watched the labours of others. Most of those efforts have succeeded beyond the expectation of their promoters. Here and there success has seemed doubtful. To those who

have not yet seen the results hoped for, I would repeat these words of Mr Ruskin in addressing the Guild of St George :—

“Their apparent success might seem slow to them, but it was contrary to the laws of nature that any good work done with good intention should fail; but the time when it should bear fruit was appointed by their Father in heaven.”

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF EASILY ACCESSIBLE
READING AND RECREATION ROOMS.

IT is written—"In the multitude of counselors there is safety;" and as since I wrote the paper that I intended to be my last on the subjects named above I have received much advice from experienced friends, I will bring their observations to the notice of my readers.

It is important that a reading-room intended for the good and the enjoyment of the whole community should not be identified by its name with any particular section of that community. The object is to attract all; but if, for instance, the room is called the "Temperance Reading-room," then it is probable that those in the district who do not yet see their way to joining a temperance society may hesitate to enter it; or if the room is called "The Church of England Reading-room," it is likely that Roman Catholics

and Dissenters would feel it was not intended for their use.

One lady told me to beware lest reading-rooms should be used for gambling purposes. This danger may be averted by enforcing a regulation that gamblers must be excluded. In the volume of the 'Quiver' for 1884, at page 287, there is an interesting paper, "Our Young Men's Club." The writer tells us that "two lower rooms were provided with forms, stools, tables, and gas, in the most simple and inexpensive manner possible,—a strong feature, however, being made of the walls, on which large coloured prints from the illustrated papers (each picture being fastened with stars of scarlet flannel and elaborate-headed brass nails) were hung, forming a cheap and simple adornment which marvellously brightened the scene. In the front room daily papers, supplied each evening by various friends, as well as illustrated periodicals and magazines, were provided for the use of members, whilst in the other games of chess, draughts, and dominoes were placed." The second rule of this club enacts that cards and gambling are strictly prohibited, under penalty of immediate expulsion. One of six lads on the committee undertakes the superintendence of the rooms on six days in the week.

It would increase the usefulness of reading-rooms if it were possible to make their frequenters practically acquainted with the benefits of the Post-office Savings Banks. Miss Marsh, in her book, 'English Hearts and English Hands,' gives an interesting account of her labours to promote thrift among the railway excavators quartered at Beckenham, while they were working in the grounds of the Crystal Palace. Miss Marsh began her labour of love among them in 1853, and afterwards she continued it among the members of the Army Work Corps, which was formed at the suggestion of Sir Joseph Paxton in 1855. The corps, Miss Marsh tells us, consisted of nearly 4000 men, chosen as likely to be useful in the Crimea, in all works connected with the army. The first detachment consisted of railway labourers, but afterwards artisans, smiths, stone-dressers, and labourers were sent out.

Miss Marsh gradually made acquaintance with many of these men. She showed interest in them, and led them to listen to the message of the Gospel. She held readings for them, she gave them books, and in the hour of need she helped them. She made them welcome to her father's beautifully-situated house, and when they sailed for the Crimea she went on the vessel and addressed parting words of counsel to them.

She gave them books to read on the voyage, and not only books, but games; she, however, asked and received a promise from the men that they would not gamble. This promise was faithfully kept. Lord Shaftesbury has observed how willing people are to assist in good works if they are given the opportunity, and it is worth mentioning that more than one firm gladly presented Miss Marsh with games and puzzles for the use of the men. Miss Marsh offered to take charge of some of the men's savings, if they chose to send them to her during their engagement in the Crimea, to place them in the savings bank in the form of a friendly club, and to keep a private account for each. She also agreed to forward a portion of the money saved to the poor relations of the men. The sums sent varied from 10s. to 20s. a-week. After a time the receipts averaged about £500 a-month, and about fifty letters a-week reached Miss Marsh from the men in the Crimea. Two kind ladies at this time assisted her in her arduous undertaking.

I should much like to quote many passages from the grateful letters Miss Marsh received; but the graphic pages in which she relates the story of her work should be also read, and I would beg those who have time to refer to her narrative. Many of the men seemed anxious

that their comrades should also possess the books they had found so useful, and they would beg to be allowed to buy some. Several pleaded earnestly to be allowed to give Miss Marsh a present in money for her trouble, and many brought little offerings from foreign lands to her. Her great reward, however, must have been in the letters some wrote from sick and some from dying beds, expressing their gratitude to her for having directed their thoughts to that better country where there shall be no more pain.

I have observed that there exists a considerable amount of book-hunger among the people, and I have wondered if it would not extend the usefulness of reading-rooms if inexpensive books could be bought from them by the poor, and whether colporteurs might not be more generally employed. I am aware that these ideas would require much developing before they could be carried out; but so much time and thought are bestowed now on schemes for the diffusion of knowledge, that I throw out the suggestion.

It has been urged that the existence of reading-rooms might draw men from their homes. To this objection I reply that, in very many places where reading-rooms have been established, the wives of the working men frequent-

ing them have expressed their great satisfaction that they should have such resorts. When it is remembered that in a poor man's cottage one or two rooms serve for cooking, sleeping, washing, eating, and nursing the children, it will be conceded that a quiet hour for reading cannot very often be secured at home ; and for the unmarried men who have no home, how doubly useful the reading-room must be.

Under Italian skies much enjoyment may be had in the open air in the evening, but are there many weeks in our year when we should like to lounge about, after a hard day's work, in the misty, rainy, or blustery evening ? The public-house is often the only one to which the men are welcome. Even the most affectionate fathers and brothers in well-appointed "rich men's dwellings," occasionally find the pattering of little feet and the ceaseless babbling of children, varied by occasional shrieks, roars, or wail, rather jarring to the nerves. How thankful the mother of, say, three or four great boys, two girls of ten or twelve, and two or three small children, living in two rooms, must be if the boys can leave it for a comfortable reading-room, where they will not find temptations to drink. Colonel Fane, of Fulbeck, Grantham, has a night-school for the village lads, and occasionally social evenings for them. The lads are only too eager to

avail themselves of opportunities given them to learn.

The writer of one letter on the subject deprecated encouraging a taste for reading, lest bad books should be chosen. This reminds one of the apprehension expressed by the historian, who contended that it was undesirable people should be taught to write lest they should forge. In a well-managed reading-room the utmost care would, as a matter of course, be taken to choose the best books. A fear was expressed from the same correspondent that village reading-rooms might degenerate into village newspaper-rooms. This objection has been met by Mr Erle, who writes :—

“Supposing that newspapers were to be largely read, what better thing could be wished? The periodical press of the present day teems with valuable information. Whoever does not read the ‘Times’ is without the best source of continuous education; and when a man has done his work for the day, is he better for wasting his time, his money, and his health sitting among degraded sots at a public-house, or reading in a wholesome, respectable place, say, the contemporary history of England at this moment, following it by means of maps within his reach?”

In considering the subject of reading-rooms from various points of view, I think we ought not to forget that there are multitudes of per-

sons in every rank of life who are earnestly trying to make the most of opportunities for improving themselves and for helping others.

The organisation of Sunday-school teachers, the members of the Church of England and other temperance societies, members of Guilds, of the Young Men's Christian Association, and a vast multitude of steady, hard-working men and women, form

"A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid."

They all need opportunities for rest and recreation. The faithful discharge of daily duties, even if those duties are of a humble and monotonous character, seems to train the mind, and to develop in many cases a taste for the pleasures of reading.

Allusion was made in a former chapter to the kindness of Colonel Smith in providing the men of the Camel Corps with books to read on their voyage to Egypt. Since that several officers have carried out the same thoughtful plan. A revised list of one hundred and twenty standard books and pamphlets, to be had for £3, will shortly be prepared by Mr Buckland, and we wish to have them placed in a box suitable for transport, which will be, I hope, on view at Messrs Sotheran's, 36 Piccadilly.

The heart of many a mother is full of thoughts of her soldier-son now. I have found at the Christian Knowledge Society some small books specially adapted for the army. The miniature manual of devotion for soldiers, by Gleig, late chaplain of the forces, could easily be slipped into a knapsack, while 'Plain Words for Soldiers' give much practical advice. Parke's Manual, 'Personal Care of Health,' would be very useful. In addressing the Guards, to whom he was bidding farewell, the Duke of Cambridge said: "First discipline, then endurance were essential for a soldier." In gallantry, the Duke said he felt sure none would be wanting.

Temperance renders it easier to obey discipline and to bear hardships—so say many of the most distinguished officers and men. The reading-rooms now attached to all barracks have proved the greatest encouragement to steadiness among the soldiers, and are seldom empty.

In an address by Lord Lyttelton to young men, an old legend is related of the times in which people were believed to make contracts with the devil, by which they were more or less bound to act, at least at times, at his bidding. The fable tells us that one wretched man was once forced to choose which of three sins he would commit: one of these sins was, to drink

till he became intoxicated; each of the two other sins were worse offences than drunkenness. So the man chose to become intoxicated, and, while in that condition, he committed both the other sins he had hoped to escape.

If the great railway companies saw their way to establishing lending libraries at stations for their men, the boon would be great. If in every porters' room a few interesting publications could be placed, they would be eagerly read. Few can read 'Engine-Driving Life,' by Reynolds, without desiring to place opportunities of recreation and improvement within the reach of the enormous multitude of hard-working and courageous men employed on the railways. The women who have charge of the waiting-rooms must lead dreary lives, and a few suitable books would brighten them. The young ladies at the railway refreshment bars are generally well educated, and would value books and papers.

Miss Weston's efforts for our sailors reach them at sea as well as on land. She sends 21,000 printed monthly letters to the ships in the royal navy. These letters are called "Blue Backs"; they are eagerly read; they are sent to the Royal Naval Hospitals at Haslar, Plymouth, and Chatham, to the coastguard stations, and to the lighthouses. She also sends

2000 copies a-month of letters, specially written for boys, to the lads in the training-ships. I have often thought how grateful the crews of yachts would be for books. Miss Weston writes that she was encouraged by Miss Robinson's wonderful success in her labours to combine temperance work with that in which she had exerted herself. Miss Robinson's papers show how much soldiers appreciate the kindness of those who lend them books, and in other ways seek to interest them.

Several persons of experience tell me that about £5 a-year is sufficient to maintain an unpretending reading-room in a village of moderate size. For £4 a good stock of books (cheap editions) may be provided. I cannot too strongly recommend that on certain fixed evenings members should be allowed to introduce friends, in order that they may be attracted to join.

It is usually found that one good work helps on another, and there seems no reason to apprehend that reading-rooms should interfere with the usefulness of parochial lending libraries, which exist in many localities. I have recently heard of books being given out from one of these libraries after church on Sundays, a plan that gave much satisfaction to the recipients.

If lending libraries could be established for

the use of the officials in great public buildings, such as the Houses of Parliament, they would be greatly appreciated, most of the officials being very intelligent, well-educated persons. Though at times these officials are almost incessantly occupied, at other periods they have intervals of leisure, in which it is believed they would gladly devote themselves to increasing their store of knowledge.

The more we enter into these considerations, the wider the field for useful exertion appears to extend; but I must now leave the subject, believing that the nation which is bestowing so much education on children will not suffer the time and labour given to study to be thrown away for want of opportunities afforded to those young boys and girls, who are blooming into youths and maidens, or becoming toil-worn men and women, of keeping up the knowledge in many cases painfully acquired, but which may prove of inestimable value to them if carefully cultivated when the days of compulsory learning are past.

LIST OF BOOKS,

Which may be obtained for about £4, 10s.

COMPILED BY LADY JOHN MANNERS AND MR BUCKLAND, OF
MESSRS SOTHERAN'S, PICCADILLY, AS SOME GUIDE TO
THOSE WHO INTEND STARTING SMALL READING-ROOMS OR
LENDING LIBRARIES.

Most of the Books are Cheap or People's Editions.

BIOGRAPHY.

Alfred the Great.	Frederick the Great.	Queen Victoria.
Beaconsfield.	Garibaldi.	Raleigh.
Beckett.	Gladstone.	Scott.
Bunyan.	Goldsmith.	Shakespeare.
Burns.	Gordon.	Socrates.
Calvin.	Homer.	Spurgeon.
Carlyle.	Johnson.	Stephenson.
Chatham.	Luther.	Wallace.
Columbus.	Nelson.	Washington.
Cromwell.	Peter the Great.	Wellington.
Dickens.	Prince Consort.	Wesley.
	Queen Elizabeth.	

VOYAGES, Etc.

Brassey's 'Sunbeam.'	Hartings' The Arctic Regions.
Cook's Voyages.	Waterton's Wanderings.

RELIGIOUS.

Bible in large type.	Prayer-Book in large type.
Bishop Wilson's Sacra Privata.	Prayers and Maxims. Published
Bishop of Truro's (Mr Wilkinson)	by Masters.
Works.	Soldiers' Manual of Devotion.
Faithful Soldiers and Servants.	Gleig.
Lewis.	Steps to Christian Manhood.
Friendly Words for Our Girls.	Florence Marryat.
Lady Baker.	The Yoke of Christ. Bishop of
Oxenden's Words of Peace.	Rochester.
— The Labouring Man's Book.	Why am I a Christian? Heygate.
Pilgrim's Progress.	Why am I a Churchman?
Plain Words. Bishop of Bedford.	

HISTORY.

Maunder's Treasury of History.	The Victoria History of England.
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FICTION.

Ainsworth—
Old St Paul's.
Tower of London.
Windsor Castle.

Cooper—
Deerslayer.
The Two Admirals.
The Spy.
The Last of the Mohicans.

Dickens—
Pickwick Papers.
Nicholas Nickleby.
Old Curiosity Shop.
Sketches by Boz.

Irving—
Bracebridge Hall.
Old Christmas.

Lytton—
Pelham.
Eugene Aram.

Marryat—
Peter Simple.
The Pirate and Three Cutters.
The King's Own.
Jacob Faithful.
Mr Midshipman Easy.

Scott—
The Monastery.
Guy Mannering.
Ivanhoe.
Waverley.
The Pirate.
Æsop's Fables.
Gulliver's Travels.
Lamb's Tales.
Paul and Virginia.
Robinson Crusoe.
Sandford and Merton.
— New History of.
Swiss Family Robinson.
Tom Brown's School Days.
Uncle Tom's Cabin.
Vicar of Wakefield.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Adams's Plain Living and High Thinking.

Animal World. (Yearly vols.)

Beeton's Book of Anecdote.

British Workman. (Yearly vols.)

Cottager and Artisan.

English Hearts and English Hands. Miss Marsh.

Enquire Within upon Everything.

Hallet's Lectures on Health.

Hand and Heart. (Yearly vols.)

Johnston's Living in Earnest.

Kirton's Temperance Tales.

Macaulay—

Lays of Ancient Rome.

Lord Clive.

Warren Hastings.

Lord Bacon.

Ranke and Gladstone.

William Pitt.

Peter the Great.

Addison and Walpole.

Miss Robinson's Active Service.

Miss Nightingale's Notes on Nursing.

Our Blue Jackets. Miss Weston.

Parke's Manual of Health.

Queen's Journal: Our Life in the Highlands.

Selections from the Publications of the Ladies' Sanitary Society.

Shaw's Home Series.

Shakespeare's Plays.

The People's Editions of the Best Poets.

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